

**METHOD OF PRODUCING COMPOST TEA PERCOLATOR
AND APPARATUS THEREFOR**

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is based on, and claims the benefit of, Provisional application
5 No. 60/259,236, filed January 2, 2001.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

(1) Field of the Invention

This invention relates to the use of compost tea. Compost tea is a solution
used to condition soil for healthy growth of plants. Compost tea has been recognized
10 as a product that can reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers.
The positive values of compost tea have been established through University studies
and practical experience. ~~The Compost Tea Percolator is an apparatus to culture
compost tea from composted organic matter to be applied to plants and their soils to
provide nutrients and desirable microorganisms. The Compost Tea Percolator~~
15 ~~provides an air powered method of extracting compost tea from solid compost into a
liquid, sprayable form.~~

(2) Description of Related Art

Compost tea has typically been prepared by brewing compost in water. A
variety of apparatus and techniques are disclosed in the "Compost Tea Brewing
20 Manual."

Other teachings pertinent to compost tea are found in Finn, U.S. Patent
5,583,045, which relates to a compost curing and odor control system; Kerouac, U.S.
Patent 6,352,855, which describes an in-vessel composting process and apparatus; and
Alms et al. U.S. Patent Publication 2002/0164781. Alms et al. discloses a compost
25 tea system including a perforate compost basket and at least one bubble generator.
However, a continuing need exists for improved means for the production of compost
tea that minimizes damage to the microorganisms in the tea.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The instant invention provides a method and apparatus for the efficient
30 production of compost tea from organic matter.

Specifically, the present invention provides an apparatus for producing
compost tea comprising:

a tank of aqueous solution;

an extraction basket positioned over the tank so permit flow-through from the basket into the tank;

a fluid conduit having a first end submerged at the bottom end of the tank, and
5 a second end positioned over the extraction basket, and

a compressed air supply operatively connected to the bottom portion of the conduit to force the aqueous solution up through the conduit.

The instant invention further provides a method for producing compost tea comprising:

10 placing compost in an extraction basket;

positioning the extraction basket over a tank to permit flow-through from the basket into the tank;

introducing an aqueous solution into the tank;

positioning a fluid conduit having first and second ends, the fluid conduit
15 having a first end submerged at the bottom of the tank, and a second end positioned to impinge on the compost in the extraction, and

supplying compressed air to the bottom portion of the conduit to force aqueous solution up the tube and into the extraction basket.

20 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

The Figure is a schematic, cross-sectional illustration of one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The apparatus used in the present invention for producing compost tea comprises:

25 1. A reservoir/collection tank,

2. A percolator tube in the tank to circulate solution over,

3. A perforated basket containing compost.

The percolator tube bubbles water from inside the tank over the perforated basket containing the compost. This aerified water leaches through the compost, carrying
30 with it nutrients and microorganisms from the compost into the solution in the tank below.

This process of percolation creates a circulation of water up the tube, over and through the perforated basket and compost, and back into the reservoir tank, creating an aerobic compost tea solution.

5 The present invention can be more fully understood by reference to the Figure, in which tank 1 contains water or aqueous solution 2. Extraction basket 3 is positioned above the tank. The basket contains compost 4. Fluid conduit 5 has first end 5A submerged at the bottom end of the tank, and a second end 5B positioned over the extraction basket. Compressed air supply 6 is operatively connected by connecting means 7 to the bottom portion of the conduit. The compressed air supply
10 is preferably provided with a throttle, not shown. In operation of this apparatus, the compressed air forces the solution in the tank up through the conduit, circulating and aerating the solution, and empties it over the basket of compost, leaching the nutrients and microorganisms from the compost, forming or enriching a compost tea. The basket is positioned above the tank so that the enriched compost tea collects in the
15 tank below.

The compost tea formed according to the present invention can be applied to plants and their soils to provide nutrients and desirable microorganisms. The present method and apparatus provides an air powered method of extracting compost tea from solid compost into a liquid, sprayable form. The method and apparatus of the present
20 invention allows a grower to leach composted organic matter, extracting the nutrients and microbes that exist in the compost into a liquid solution. The circulation of the compost tea according to the present invention permits the microorganisms to be cultured and increase the beneficial microbes and their by-products. This solution can be injected into an irrigation system or sprayed on with a conventional sprayer.

25 The instant process and apparatus, using air to power circulation for extraction and culturing of the compost tea, provides the additional advantage of minimal mechanical damage to microbes in the solution.

The leached solution from the compost can be further enhanced by adding nutrients such as sugar to the culture tank solution, to increase the microbial
30 population. The compost is the source of beneficial microbes and the present apparatus extracts, collects, and cultures compost tea. This tea contains and extracts the desired beneficial organisms and their by-products.

What is claimed is I CLAIM:

1. (cancelled) A method of producing compost tea comprising the steps f:
2. (cancelled) Providing an apparatus comprising:
3. (cancelled) A reservoir tank of aqueous solution;
- 5 4. (cancelled) An extraction basket suspended over this tank so flow-through from this basket is collected in the reservoir tank below
5. (cancelled) Air tube runs from the reservoir to the extraction basket, is submerged at the bottom of the tank, and opens over the extraction basket apparatus.
6. (cancelled) Compressed air supply feeds air into the bottom of tube to force
- 10 aqueous solution up the tube and into the top of the extraction basket. Solution leaches through the basket and collects in the reservoir below. These nutrients and microbes may then be cultured to increase their concentration. This solution is compost tea.
7. (new) An apparatus for producing compost tea comprising:
a tank of aqueous solution;
- 15 an extraction basket positioned over the tank to permit flow through from this basket to be collected into the tank;
a fluid conduit having a first end submerged at the bottom end of the tank, and a second end positioned over the extraction basket; and
a compressed air supply operatively connected to the bottom portion of the
- 20 conduit to force the aqueous solution up through the conduit.
8. (new) An apparatus of Claim 7 wherein the compressed air supply further comprises a throttle means.
9. (new) A method for producing compost tea comprising:
placing compost in an extraction basket;
- 25 positioning the extraction basket over a tank to permit flow-through from the basket into the tank;
introducing an aqueous solution into the tank;
positioning a fluid conduit having first and second ends, the fluid conduit having a first end submerged at the bottom of the tank, and a second end positioned to
- 30 impinge on the compost in the extraction basket; and
supplying compressed air to the bottom portion of the conduit
to force aqueous solution up through the conduit and into the extraction basket.

10. (new) A method of Claim 9 further comprising adding nutrient to the aqueous solution.

11. (new) A method of Claim 10 wherein the nutrient comprises sugar.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Method of producing compost tea is disclosed the steps of: introducing a flow of aqueous solution over and through a basket by passing an aqueous solution over
5 and through a basket containing compost. This flow leaches and washes microorganisms and nutrients from organic compost and other organisms and nutrient-rich materials from the basket into the culture tank. The culture tank collects and cultures microorganisms and nutrients, creating compost tea. Compressed air is used to ~~power this~~ provide circulation instead of mechanical pumps, which can injure
10 the organisms as they pass through.